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GRACE ABOUNDING:

A SERMON

PREACHED ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF

MRS. ANN AMELIA ANDREW,

WIFE OF BISHOP ANDREW.

BY REV. WILLIAM CAPERS, D. D.

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BEING

A FUNERAL SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE METHODIST E. CHURCH IN OXFORD, GA.,

June 19, 1842,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF

MRS. ANN AMELIA ANDREW,

WIFE OF REV. J. O. ANDREW,

ONE OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

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A FUNERAL SERMON.

"NOW, UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH, BY CHRIST JESUS, THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.—*Ephesians* iii, 20, 21.

YOU will not deem it strange or impertinent, brethren, that on an occasion so mournful as the present, we have chosen a doxology for the text. Holy Job would still be praising God when every thing was gone ; and St. Paul gloried mainly in his infirmities. Such men must needs have dwelt deeply in the secret of God's unfathomable love. And we, in our measure, even we, "have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." It is, indeed, natural for grief to clothe itself in sackcloth, and commune with sadness, but it is by no means gracious ; for why should our heavenly Father have hung the chambers of our afflictions with the pictures of his grace, and put a glory on the grave, if we are only to be sad in our sorrow, and disconsolate when we are bereaved ? "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again ; neither doth God respect any person ; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." It is the glory of our holy religion to bestow a special blessing upon "them that weep." Our chief good, in every possible condition, it enhances its value with incalculable interest in times of trouble ; increasing power to the faint, and multiplying resources to the exhausted soul. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ," "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

And yet sorrow is not annihilated ; nor is nature destroyed. There still is pain, and there still should be sympathy. And so when Lazarus was dead, and JESUS saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, was troubled and wept. "JESUS wept." And it is the sympathy of Jesus with us in our afflictions, which makes it good for us to weep, and sanctifies sorrow

to be a sacrament of joy. "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."

How unspeakably kind is this feature of the grace of God; and how strikingly in proof that the origin of the gospel was from the bosom of divine love! The most painful incidents of life—the scenes and circumstances which reveal man's helplessness, and chill him with a sense of his poverty as a dweller in the dust, and nothing to be accounted of—which discover him to be but a bruised reed, a sorry worm, with death for his inheritance—which make his head sick and his heart faint, as one smitten with a curse; these most humbling, most undoing circumstances, seem chosen by the love of Jesus for the special exercise of his abundant grace. The good Samaritan loves most to be busy with the wounded and half dead. It is so above comparison with the love of Jesus; and in proportion as we are baptized into his Spirit, it is so with his disciples. We must needs "weep with them that weep." We are bound to it in the constitution of our nature; and we are bound to it by a stronger and a better bond in the love of the Redeemer. If there is any thing man needs of his fellow, and any thing which, in turn, he is bound to render, it is sympathy in the time of sorrow. And death is especially the enactor of sorrow. The dying, indeed, may rejoice; and the dead may have entered into rest; but so essentially social is man—so involved with his fellows—that the meanest individual may not pass away without sorrow to some one. As to the ties of consanguinity, they are inviolably sacred among all classes; and he were not a man who might lose parent or child, brother or sister, without poignant pain. And in proportion as the deceased was worthy, the sympathy extends, till whole communities are afflicted by the death of an individual.

It has been eminently so in the present instance. Even before the event of death, during the long period of our sister's illness, who that watched with her by night, or attended her by day, did not feel a personal interest, as if for a near kinswoman whose sickness they were soothing. And when the event transpired, and she was no more, you all felt the pain of a personal bereavement. No single individual was unaffected by it. And what do we behold in this solemnity, but a community in mourning, with our chief minister a widowed father, and his children weeping for their mother! There has, indeed, come a cloud over our sky; and this is the shadow of it—its under side looking toward the earth;—but the rainbow of the covenant is bright upon its bosom; and above, all is radiant with the light of heaven. O, could we reveal that light, and discourse as the subject warrants! could we disclose the riches of "the mystery which hath been hid from ages

and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints," and was made manifest to our sister ! could we exhibit that very "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," which so ravished her spirit in her final hours ! could we trace her ascent from the bed of death to her place in glory ! (O, could we !) and could we make the application with becoming power, that as she so recently was with us, we may shortly be with her ; and alike prove together the divinity of the gospel, the verity of hope, the power of faith, the actuality of the soul's being conformed to Christ, and made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light !" could we discourse of this as the truth is, and as it was, and as it shall be, to the glory of God, "by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages," we might well repress our griefs, and exulting with St. Paul, exclaim in the language of the text,—

"Now, unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Here is a burden of blessings : a fountain of the waters of life, full and overflowing : a voice, as from the throne of God, announcing the concurrence of almighty power with almighty love, to make the miserable happy, and the sorrowful to rejoice ;—so that the very groans of our humanity may articulate praises, and our sighs and sobs fetch an echo of hosannas.

It is not assuming too much for the sense of the text, to say, that THE ABILITY OF GOD is herein pledged for the assurance of his people, to do for them "*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.*" And more : it contemplates that ability as being actually in exercise, "*according to the power that worketh in us.*" And, further, the implication is tantamount to a direct statement, that the gracious willingness of God to do thus "*exceeding abundantly,*" is co-ordinate and concurrent with his ability to do :—or how might the ability of God be exulted in, if it was believed that he might not prove willing to exert it ? his benevolence falling short of his power.

And what the ability of God, thus graciously exerted, might accomplish for the Ephesians, in that age, our apostle contemplates to be carried on "*in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages.*"

There is, indeed, more in the text, but time will not serve to discourse of more, before we proceed to notice some incidents in the experience of our deceased sister, which we deem confirmatory of these blessed truths. And as it is material to our purpose to notice an objection of modern unbelief, which considers of the gospel as if the power of the Spirit had been limited to the age of miracles ;—and as

we wish to do this without separating between the doctrine of the text, and its illustration in what we have to say of our departed friend, we will reverse the order, and consider first,

I. That the work of power which the text celebrates as being within God's gracious ability to do, was to be carried on in the church "*throughout all ages.*"

II. And afterward, we will inquire into the precious riches of this divine truth, that God "*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*"

I. And first, let us consider that the work of power which the text celebrates, was to be carried on in the church "*throughout all ages.*"

The text evidently makes neither difference nor distinction between age and age : neither as to the ability of God "*to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think ;*" nor as to the exercise of this ability, "*according to the power that worketh in us ;*" nor as to the sphere of its operation, "*in the church ;*" nor as to its great administrator, "*Christ Jesus ;*" nor as to the glory which should redound to God for the wonders of our being saved. And as there is one God, and no other but he, who changeth not, neither grows weary ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, who "*must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet,*" and who is "*head over all things to the church ;*" and one only atoning sacrifice ; and one resurrection of Christ from the dead ; and one Holy Ghost, who abideth for ever ; and one Bible, and one gospel ; one faith, one hope, one charity, for all ages ; and there never can come any others in place of these ; how can it have been conceived, that that which we find to have been inculcated by divine inspiration, as the very soul and substance of Christianity—the fruit of Christ's death, the work of the Spirit, the end and aim of the gospel covenant, and of the constitution of the church, the burden of the apostles' prayers and point of all their preaching—how can it have been conceived that this should grow into an impossibility with the lapse of time ? Has man fallen into a new depravity, which the blood of Christ never atoned for, and the Spirit was not given to purge away ? If not, why appropriate the mighty working of God's powerful love to the apostles' age, and confound all after time in one continuous, hopeless reprobation ? Shall we hold the preaching of the gospel and the reading of the Scriptures to be a mere rehearsal of what so long ago was, without any response possible as to what now is ? And has the Bible then become a dead letter, and the word of God worn out ? God forbid ! None can be so hardy as to hold this. But if not *all this*, what else might we hold short of the truth—the whole truth—which believing, and praying "*to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man*"

—"that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"—that ye "might be filled with all the fulness of God," shouts a doxology "unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"—if the entire truth of God is not to be received, and the Bible has become obsolete or impracticable in some of its lessons, what parts of the book may we cleave to for the present gospel? Can the objectors agree as to what? He that offends in one point is guilty of all; and when we shall have shut ourselves up in unbelief with respect to some truths, we shall find it doubly hard to believe for the rest. And how fearful a responsibility is involved in it! Hear St. Paul: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And the testimony of Jesus: "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." And is not that another gospel, which, denying the possibility of what Paul preached, preaches a form of godliness, or a power of godliness, radically different from, and essentially below it? And how might we more effectually, or more offensively take away from the book of God, than by denying its most vital and essential truths?

Let it be remembered that this is not the question of the continuance of miracles. Miracles never constituted any part of the gospel of Christ; and were never held to be integrant to Christianity, but circumstantial and ministerial only. They formed no part of the personal religion of those by whom they were wrought; and were used only for a sign of the authority of the gospel. They were therefore superseded by the Scriptures; (as was prophecy;) the sacred canon being complete, and the seal of God set to it as his own perpetual testimony, which the Spirit should apply for the confirmation of faith. But make the most you will of the working of miracles, and you shall never find more than the scaffolding of the house, without so much as a single stone of the building itself;—a voice, it may be, a symbol that God was there, without any articulation of his mind and will, or quickening Spirit, or transforming power.

But if it cannot be denied that there are those to be found in the Christian church who limit the agency of the Holy Ghost, and explain away the verity of Scripture; as if the power of grace had dwindled into a conceit, and the Holy Spirit was no more than a name in a book; so neither can it be denied that theirs is a philosophy of religion devoid of unction; holding its forms and morals in communion with the world; and living as if religion was not the principal thing, but rather a cir-

cumstance than the chief good. Would that such might take warning from the words of the Saviour respecting the scribes and Pharisees, for they are in danger: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men!" And is it not cause of alarm that it should have happened with this generation, so much like that, that abundance of pains is taken with "the outside of the cup and platter"—the minutiae of creeds, the order of churches, the succession of priesthood, the thousand differences of mere human persuasion—and Christianity is set up, and her banners made broad, and the Bible beautified with gold, while "the faith once delivered to the saints" has seldom a champion, and "the deep things of God" are accounted old-time stories, or dreams of the dead? But so it was: the doctrine of the prophet might sleep with his bones, if they garnished his sepulchre; and the love of God was a thing of naught in comparison to their tithings of mint, and boastful phylacteries. It cannot be disguised that the carnal mind is at the root of all this. Men love their lusts, and pray as a penance; and is it any wonder if they know not that "the kingdom of God is within them?" How might they be sanctified, and still unclean? And if their washings of snow-water leave only a specious uncleanness, who might pretend to a deeper baptism? Are they not the men? Do they not know? And shall not wisdom die with them?

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." To such, the holiness of the gospel seems not a consuming fire, but a reviving, purifying flame. They have no philosophy of "wood, hay, stubble," to put in the place of the word of God; but while they see the bush burning and not consumed, they accept the sign, and trust the Almighty for a present, full salvation.

And "why should it be thought, with any, a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" Or why should it not be believed that "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live?" Can any creed admit of less? Is it too hard to believe in a conscious justification, a positive regeneration of the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, the witness of adoption, perfect love, and "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ?" Is this too hard, when we have the express authority for it of the word of God? Then we shall find there is something still harder which we must believe. If we cannot believe *with*

the word of God, we must believe *against* it. We must believe that without faith we can please God; and that without holiness we can inherit heaven: for that is not faith which is not conformed to the Scriptures, nor is that holiness which is not of the operation of the Spirit through faith. We must believe that whereas the necessity of our being regenerated, given a new heart, and subsisted in a new life, was so great and absolute as to require no less than the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whose sacrifice and energy to effect it; yet we, following the glosses of men, and leaning to our own understanding rather than the word of God, indulging in unbelief, and so concluding against God's testimony of his Son, and setting aside that testimony for our own persuasions—we, in this our unbelief, unregeneracy, and virtual rejection of the salvation of God, may nevertheless obtain eternal life, even as those who have been willing and obedient. We must believe, that for saying "Lord, Lord," (some in one way and some in another,) we shall be saved, though we do not the things which are required of us. We must believe, that the holy God, the Almighty, cannot, with all the provisions of his word and Spirit, save us *from our sins* in this life; and yet, that this holy God will take us to his bosom *in our sins* in the life to come. There is nothing harder to believe than this.

But "the article of death" is fondly looked to as the expurgator of the soul. As if that which had been neglected, disbelieved, denied, or even slighted and rejected during all one's life, might in the moment of the soul's transition be imparted to it. Strange conceit! But can it be believed, that what the blood of Jesus and the Spirit of all grace should fail to effect "in the time accepted and the day of salvation," can be accomplished by the frost of death? Where, in the Scriptures, is the last enemy thus converted into man's chief friend? Nowhere in Scripture, nowhere in reason, and nowhere in fact. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." We trust you are not of the number of those who have "limited the Holy One of Israel;" or who, under a cloak of religion, make "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Attend with us then, while, with reverence, we inquire into the precious riches of this divine truth,

II. *That "God is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."*

We have seen that the text makes no difference between age and age. None is expressed, and none was intended. And none could

have been, unless it was meant to empty the gospel of its essential grace, and leave the Bible as a dead letter, and religion "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" to the after ages. It remains, therefore, that we pursue our meditations in the same spirit of faith in which the epistle was at first to be received; as if it had been directed to us by name, and was now for the first time read from the hand of the apostle.

God being "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," the ability of God, according to this power, becomes the ground and measure of Christian confidence.

Who shall set bounds to this ability? Who shall define it, or measure the extent of its operation? Neither can we conceive of the infinitude of the divine attributes singly, neither can we comprehend the grand idea of that perfection, which, maintaining the infinity of each, holds them all so blended as that the consistency and harmony of the whole are no less infinite than the attributes themselves. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them." "The thunder of his power who can understand?"

But our business is, not a prying inquiry to search out the ability of God, as if we might fix its extent, or tell the measure of its power; but a meditation, rather, of this most salutary truth, that Jehovah, the Almighty, is the God of salvation. There is no abstraction in the text. God, who made the worlds, has become our Redeemer; and God our Redeemer has all power in heaven and in earth. It is therefore assumed, that no necessities of the soul can exceed his ability to save; nor any impossibilities of nature prevent the fulfilment of his word. "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee; saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

Would we know then what God is able to do for us, we need only search the Scriptures with prayer, and we shall know. Here all is truth—pure, perfect, eternal truth; worthy to be received with all the heart, and trusted in though heaven and earth should fail. We turn, then, to the Bible; the inspired record of the grace of God to man, and

revelation of his mind and will. What do we find to be written in it? What does it teach of God's ways to man? What are the precepts it enjoins, the promises it proclaims, the privileges it proposes, the holiness it requires? There can be nothing here redundant or superfluous, for every letter is the word of God. Nothing which we might not believe, for it is all the truth sent down out of heaven that we may believe and be saved. Nothing enjoined as a duty which we cannot perform, for every precept is from the God of love. Nothing required as to the affections of the heart, the purposes of the mind, the exercise of the understanding, the volitions of the will, our motives, our principles, our aims, which it might be impossible to fulfil; for "the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." When then, as with St. Paul for the Ephesians, "we bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God;"—or, as with the same apostle to the Thessalonians, "we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ," does the sentiment exceed your belief? Are you confounded with its sublimity, and ready to exclaim of its fulness of grace, as the Psalmist of the infinitude of the Godhead, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it?" Then know, that our God "is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." We, indeed, of ourselves cannot *attain* unto it, any more than old chaos could have given forth the wonderful formations and harmonies of nature. But what of that? "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." And, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And, "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If God is in the work, doubt not it can be done; and that, "exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think."

But let us contemplate some of the particulars of that work of God which we may confidently believe, according to the Scriptures, his ability is engaged to accomplish for his people. Or in other terms, that work the fulfilment of which the apostle prayed for, for the Ephesians, and the contemplation of which, to be fulfilled in them and the church in all ages, called forth the doxology of the text.

Now we know that our whole redemption is the work of God. So is the gift of the Holy Ghost, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the establishment of the church, and the entire of that enlightenment and grace whereby a sinner is converted from the error of his ways, and brought to repentance and a new life.

“The Father gives the Son;
The Son his flesh and blood:
The Spirit applies, and faith puts on,
The righteousness of God.”

There is nowhere any room for boasting; but the sinner, man, finds his account in humiliation at the foot of the cross; renouncing every other plea but that only all-prevailing one of the blood of the Lamb of God. There is no single thing, first or last, which he can do to add to God's provided price for the pardon of his sins; or to increase the efficiency of the Spirit's operation in the renewal of his nature. All he can do, is, to embrace God's ability in Christ crucified, to be “the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,” and to adopt him freely into the family of the redeemed, as a sinner saved by grace.

But the believers at Ephesus were already justified and in a state of grace; so that what God should yet do for them “exceeding abundantly,” could not possibly apply to the act of justification, or adoption, but must have been intended of their subsequent sanctification and completeness in the Christian character. This is evident in the text, for they must have been well experienced in the grace of God when St. Paul could rest his highest aspirations for them on the efficiency of the power which was then already working in them; and supposed that according to the operations of that self-same power, they might obtain exceeding abundance of grace, above all they might ask or think. And it is still more evident from the context, where, in the apostle's brief synopsis of his prayer for them, (which forms the basis of the text,) without one word about justification or adoption, or which might apply to any thing anterior, we find a compend of so sublime and perfect a Christianity as one might think could hardly be attained to this side of heaven. (And of which, brethren, we take occasion to say, our so much reviled doctrine of Christian perfection—held to be synony-

mous with perfect love—should seem to form but a part.) The doxology was the conclusion of this prayer; and was the utterance of the apostle's adoring gratitude for such riches of grace as he therein invoked, being made possible to man in covenant with God, by Jesus Christ, to those who at that time belonged to the church at Ephesus, and to all in the church throughout all ages. This prayer, then, forms our best guide for the certainty of the meaning of the language of the text, *That God "is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."*

Our apostle was now in prison. And writing in view of so great a discouragement as he knew that must be to the church; and having expressed a kind concern lest it should prove a cause of stumbling to any; to assist their faith and patience by calling them to the supplies of the Spirit, he penned the incomparable passage which we have now before us—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. NOW, UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH, BY CHRIST JESUS, THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN."

Taking up the petitions of this prayer, then, for a guide, we find, that in circumstances of uncommon trial, the believers at Ephesus were assured of the ability of God, according to the riches of his glory, to grant them to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. So that whether Paul was bound, or themselves were bound, and come what might, they should still prove steadfast in their tribulations, unmoveable and triumphant. This might seem hard to 'poor human nature, always shrinking from the shock of pain; but it was easy with God, and he could make it easy to them; so that their constancy and triumph should not be a bare victory, hardly accomplished through sweat and blood, but, as the text expresses it, "*exceeding abundantly.*" And this petition, viewed in the light of the doxology, which shouts glory to God, alike, "*throughout all ages,*" we understand, further, to teach, that, as the supply of the power of the Spirit was then sufficient for all trials of the persecuted church, turning them into sacraments of peace and rejoicing unto God, so at all times like sup-

plies of power, by the same Spirit, shall be afforded under all that tries our faith or frets our patience in this vale of tears. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And we cannot pass it without notice, that St. Paul was looking for all this grace in the church, at a time the most hopeless with respect to means. He was himself bound in prison, and their pastors might be, but so long as the Holy Ghost was not bound, and his ministries wrought mightily in the soul, all might go well: they should be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, and that, "exceeding abundantly," above all they might ask or think. And if we judge rightly that those trials of the church, and the supplies of the Spirit under them, stand as examples for all trials and afflictions in after time, and of the strength of grace to be ministered to the Christian passing through no matter how hot a fire, we may find our account in it, when we consider that our greatest necessities are not likely to befall us in the midst of sacraments and holy offices, but in solitude, and, it may be, where none but God can see or succour us. There may be, and we fear there is with some, an idolatry of what we call *means*; but let us be assured that those are not means of any good to us, which we use not for the invocation of the Holy Ghost. He it is, and he only, who can go with us, and will, through all our tribulations, and into death itself; strengthening us "with might in the inner man," and making us "more than conquerors through him that loved us;" so that, at the worst of times, we may still shout the doxology, "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Yes, the vitality and energy of religion consist in this, "*the power that worketh in us.*" Sermons shall fail to instruct, and sacraments charm us no longer, and pastors and teachers give us over to the dead, when presently "the silver cord is being unloosed, and the golden bowl broken, and the pitcher broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern," and every thing external shall have become to us, as we to it, withered grass and a faded flower; but as with the perishing of the outer man the inner man dies not, but the soul is still whole in its decaying tenement, so is there still strength for it in the power of the Spirit, revealing the things of Christ, comforting it with grace, ravishing it with salvation.

This first petition of the prayer of our apostle, then, the fulfilment of which he anticipates, with the sublime doxology of the text, was uttered

in the faith of an exceeding abundance of grace for the suffering Christian, suffer as he might, and in what age he might, and from whatever causes. The rest of the prayer imbodyes the sublimest conceptions of the fulness, richness, and completeness of the same grace with respect to the entire scope of the believer's sanctification, establishment, and preparation for glory, which could possibly be put into language. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." And is this Scripture? and true, as God is true? Or shall we Christians stumble at its very richness, and exclaim with the heathen governor, "Paul, thou art beside thyself!" But who prays thus for his own soul? Whose faith and spiritual longings bear any proportion to this immensity of grace? We fear to attempt any comment on the words, lest we dishonour them with our too humble thoughts and poverty of speech. But what can it mean for Christ to dwell in your hearts by faith, less than that your faith should continually take hold on a present indwelling Christ? And if Christ, dwells in your heart, must not your heart be *kept* by him? Not a corner of it merely, or here and there some cleaner spot, but *your whole heart*. And if your heart be kept by Christ—*your whole heart*—with what, and for what must he keep it? Where is any room left for worldly loves?—for covetousness, sensuality, pride or vanity; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?" Nay, more, can Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, consist with the least allowance of carking care, distrust of God, or dissatisfaction with his providence? Might he teach differently in the heart, from what he did on the mount? Or is the spiritual presence of Christ less holy than was his manifestation in the flesh?

It is this dwelling of Christ in the heart by faith, which is the foundation and strength of all the rest in this wonderful compend of the grace of God which we are considering. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." To say, then, that Christ dwelling in the heart by faith sweeps it of evil, is scarcely to say any thing. It is hardly so much as a first word in the discourse of his all-powerful, all-pervading, sanctifying love. Who shall tell what it is to be "rooted and grounded in love?" to be able "to comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge?"

to be "filled with all the fulness of God?" Depths of divine love, who can fathom them? Who shall reach to its height, or comprehend its breadth? Here is wisdom which none but God can reveal! Here is understanding which none but the pure in heart can know! But what is it to be filled with God? And, as if that were not enough, with THE FULNESS OF GOD? And as if, still, that were not enough, with ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD? We cannot tell what it is. Perhaps an angel from heaven might; perhaps not. Paul himself might have failed to define it, though he knew it, and felt it; and knew and felt its delightful possibility for his brethren. Or did he not know? Could he otherwise have prayed for it? Might he, by any possibility, have "bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" to pray for impossibilities, known to be such? And then, might he record his petitions for holy Scripture, and conclude with a doxology because God was able to fulfil all the known impossibilities which he had been praying for? and, "*exceeding abundantly!*" No, it is, every jot, the word of God; and would that we might take hold of it with all our hearts, and hail with believing adoration our Redeemer God, the Almighty, with whom all things are possible!

The sum is, that to them "who have obtained like precious faith" with the Ephesians, there are given "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these they might be *partakers of the divine nature*; having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." So that we need not "stagger at the promise of God through unbelief," but may be "strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he hath promised, he is able also to perform." GRACE! (so rich is the blood of Christ which bought it, and almighty the Holy Spirit who applies it,) THE GRACE OF GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, *is, now and for ever, infallibly sufficient*. It is so for "the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;" for the active duties of life, and life's most painful trials. It is so for all stages of life, and all conditions of men; for the young and for the aged, for the humble and for the honourable, for the unfortunate and for the prosperous. It is so for life, and for death, and for the judgment to come; and it is so "throughout all ages, world without end." So we find it to be in the word of God; and so in the experience of the saints.

And now, beloved brethren, that we may be assisted to lay these

great truths to heart, and in our continual devotions look with a readier faith for "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," according to the riches of his grace, let us briefly review some of those incidents in the experience of our late sister—and especially her final hours—by which she, "being dead, yet speaketh:" and which, as they concerned one so long and intimately known to you all, and, for the most part transpired in the midst of you, we may appeal to with the greater confidence, and you will receive with the fuller conviction.

Of her early piety, the preacher was a witness, when, more than thirty years ago, being her pastor in the city of Charleston, he was almost daily in conversation with her, met her frequently in class, and had every opportunity, both pastoral and social, of forming a just estimate of her Christian character. She was then in her fifteenth year, but had already proved "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" having found forgiveness and the witness of adoption at a camp-meeting in Colleton district, S. C., two years before. This will not strike you as surprisingly early for the period of her conversion, when you know that from her infancy she had been nurtured in the bosom of the church, and had the advantages of the care of a godly mother, and the prayers and instructions of such men as Asbury, Jonathan Jackson, Kendrick, Mills, Myers, and Kennedy. Her mother's house—we cannot forget—was a quiet retreat in almost the heart of the city, where the preachers were kindly made at home, and loved to stop and leave their blessing. Here the Bible was the principal book; and the library was composed chiefly of Christian biographies, and works of practical piety. Religion was the main thing; and the family always in readiness for praise and prayer. This is a faithful sketch of the nursery of our sister's childhood and youth; and she was a fair example of the fruit of such goodly influences as were there prevailing. The meek composure of her mother's spirit, never sad and never frivolous; constant Christian conversation, in which religion was synonymous with pure love; frequent reading of the Holy Scriptures, and religious books; and the continual intercourse of the preachers, sealing, as it were with authority, the lessons of the family circle, afforded her no ordinary assistances. And the effect was not more remarkable in her early conversion, than her early and abiding sense of the fear of God, reverence for religion, honour for the church, constancy at worship, and general conscientiousness. It entered her mind and dwelt with her understanding as a first principle, that religion was the principal thing, and the favour of God the well-spring of happiness. And she was thus furnished beforehand with an armour of incalculable

value when she was converted, so that her faith failed not, but she steadily maintained her confidence in Christ, and consistently exemplified its vital power.

We are struck here with the proof which our narrative affords of *the unity of grace*. You are well familiar with that "abomination of the Egyptians," a Methodist camp-meeting; and especially the altar-scenes at one of these meetings, when "the shout of a King is among them." And you can estimate the difference between these scenes, and the noiseless quiet of our sister's home. Nothing could be softer than the breath of prayer at that family altar, where a mother of the meekest spirit worshipped with her daughters. There, instruction gave her lessons in the kindest accents, and prayer breathed with stillness in the ear of Jesus. But what was one thus nurtured to expect at a camp-meeting? The event told what. Her heart was roused to unqualified repentance, she trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, was justified freely, and returned to her mother a joyful believer. We will not stop to ask if the conversion of a child at a Methodist camp-meeting might be of any importance to her after life; but we remark on *the unity of grace*, that there was no contrariety, no incongruity, between the camp-meeting and the closet—"the battle of the warrior with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," (if such it be,) and the gentle breathings of a peaceful spirit closeted in prayer. The camp-meeting served to quicken the spirit and awaken the conscience, without misleading the heart, or diverting the mind from a simple reliance on the cross of Christ. There she found the "treasure hid in a field," and gave up all for the possession of that treasure; and when she returned to her mother's house, and kneeled again at the family altar, and again communed with the stillness of devotion, there was no disgust as of a strange religion, but all was harmony, unity, and love. And so she passed her youth, a sincere Christian, knowing in whom she believed, worshipping God in sincerity, diligent in her duties, and respected and beloved.

It is not intended to rehearse a biography; but there were some traits of Christian character of the highest moment which our sister did so well exemplify throughout her life, that we might not pass them by. And first we notice how just a sense she had of *the entireness of Christian obligation*, as requiring the glory of God to be the ruling principle over all others. Her life was full of examples of the exercise of this virtue; but we can only mention her devotion to the itinerancy. When she became the wife of a Methodist travelling preacher, she married, with the man, his work; nor would she consent to the one, till

she had made up her mind to the other. The wife was constant, and so was the Christian woman : insomuch that when, for many years yet, the church had not provided for the subsistence of a preacher's family, by any allowance of the form of Discipline, and the policy seemed to be for an unmarried ministry or none at all, no difficulties thrown in her way, or mortifications she had to endure, could for a moment incline her to a location. Indeed, we are well advised, that in those times of trial, her husband's sympathy might have yielded—perhaps once and again—had it not been for her angel-like remonstrances. If they might not be otherwise subsisted, she could take in needle-work, she could even employ herself as a milliner, (as for a time she actually did,) but to have her husband locate she could not. It was enough that he was usefully employed in his Master's vineyard, and they were not in want ; God was glorified, and she would be content. Time would fail to tell of her active zeal and Christian charities. But let us not forget the example of that instance, at least, in the case of the poor children about the Factory ; whom she instructed at that place, (three miles from her dwelling,) every sabbath afternoon, while her mornings, before public worship, were taken up with the children of her nearer neighbourhood. And what might we not say of her uniform piety, her prudence, her diligence, her patience, her filial devotion to her sainted mother, her Christian pains-taking in domestic life, and especially the religious nurture of her children. It afforded a refreshment of great sweetness to her spirit in her long and wasting illness, when her own daughters were so becomingly assiduous in their attentions to her, that she had been permitted to perform like soothing offices to her honoured parent. But we may not linger. Death was at the door, and well it was that she had spent her life to purpose.

There is a cloud here, which, we confess, oppresses our spirits. It is no obscuration of the light of her shining character ; nor any diminution of the excellence of her Christian virtues. Nothing of the kind. But when we consider the elements of a mother's heart—and that mother a woman and a Christian of sympathies so intense, and affections well refined ; and think of a daughter such as hers was—so sweet of spirit, so soft of manners, so dutiful, so innocent, so lovely in all her character ; and that daughter blighted without fault, heart-broken, her reason hopelessly dethroned, but cleaving to her mother with a devotion as if all the affections she ever knew were concentrated in this one—we cannot but conclude that there was much besides over exertion and bodily exposure to produce that mother's death. We know that she bore it well—admirably well—so as none but a Christian could have

borne ; but the strength of Christian fortitude tells nothing of the force of the shock which she must have suffered, and the injury sustained. The martyrs could shout through the flames, but their bodies nevertheless perished. O, it was a scene long to be remembered, a spectacle never to be forgot, when she lay there, (or rather sat, for she could not lie,) with such accumulated woes upon her, always patient, always placid, always Christian ! Did she not prove that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us ?”

How pure is God ! How holy is religion ! We said that our sister in all that scene of “suffering affliction” was calm, tranquil, and collected ; and more than this, she had “peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” But hers was not quite yet a sky without a cloud, “a sea of glass,” “the body of heaven in its clearness.” There was yet one spot upon her field of vision, which was not pure light—one weakness of the heart, which was not pure love. How might she look upon that blameless, blighted one, her “broken flower,”* day and night weeping by her side, with love for those who, *she believed*, had caused the ruin ? “*Take heed to yourselves ; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.*” And yet those who were believed to have done this thing, neither turned, “saying, I repent,” neither did she suppose that they kept their shame in silence. What philosophy, then, might have hesitated to dismiss her spirit in peace ; and even eulogize the virtue which under so unsufferable a sense of wrong, both spoke no evil and abjured all malice ? But the heaven she was going to was not a heaven of philosophy, but of love ; pure, essential, boundless love ; love that dwells in the bosom of God, and the heart of Jesus. And she must be baptized with this baptism. She must overcome, and be “clothed in white raiment,” “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” “The king’s daughter” must be “all glorious within.” So she believed, and so it was done unto her ; and from that moment her spirit entered into rest, and dwelt in “the peace which passeth understanding,” and “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” We cannot mention one of a thousand of the gracious things she said, while her sanctified spirit awaited its change. She spoke much day and night ; and all that she said was saintly and to purpose. Now she triumphed in the love of Jesus ; and then she would recommend him to all about her. Her husband, her children one by one, her near kindred, her

* So her daughter calls herself, and seems to believe it to be her name.

servants, the children of her friends one by one, her neighbours, all within her reach, received her blessing. Addressing her husband, with reference to trials of former years, "You know," she said, "*Trust in God*, was our motto. We have never lacked any thing; and now that death is come, I do not lack for even dying grace." Trust in God, was her favourite theme to all her Christian friends. "Trust him," she would say, "trust him, and never doubt. Look at me, and learn to put your trust in God. Sinner was my name, but behold, I am saved by grace. God blesses me, and he will never forsake you." At one time she exclaimed, "O, that all the world were here, and I had strength to tell them of God's goodness, and exhort them to put their trust in him!" "I am not tired of the world," she said; "I could live for my husband, and children, and friends; and yet I cannot help longing to depart and be with Christ." To her husband, our revered bishop, her exhortations were peculiarly striking and affecting; as if the tenderness of the wife had been inspired with a seraph's zeal, to encourage him to his work, and trust in God. And finally, she requested of her friends to suppress their tears at her grave, and suffer a song of triumph to be sung on her account. This is *dying*, CHRISTIAN DYING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. And "now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, *throughout all ages*, world without end. Amen."

As we said of the text, we say of this dying scene: it was rich beyond conception. There was abundance of grace in it, to the glory of God, by Jesus Christ. We cannot analyze it, but we ought to consider it with deep attention. One thing especially strikes us:—that the very circumstances which we might regard the most melancholy in the case, were made occasions of the highest rapture. It is said, that most men die when they are most busy to live. And we may be assured there is truth enough in it to allay the heats of our impatience after earthly things. Perhaps, too, it might be said that most parents die when there is most to concern them in the condition of their children. We cannot affirm for the general remark; but it was strikingly so in the case of our sister. So she felt it, and when her victory was complete, and she was reclining, as it were, on the bosom of Jesus, "quite on the verge of heaven," she pointed to her beloved stricken child, and said, "I might wish to live, if it were only for *that one*, but I cannot forbear my longings after Jesus." We confess we had neither asked nor thought for so much. To us, it seemed, that when that devoted mother had resigned herself meekly to the will of God, and sub-

mitted all to his disposal, the work was done. But it was scarce begun. Grace was to triumph with unbounded exultation ; and more and more for the much that should forbid it. And the same with respect to that trial of forgiveness. We might have felt inclined to smoothe the commandment, if not to the capabilities of nature, yet to the weakness of a Christian heart in a mother's bosom. But no : the roughest edge of the sword of the Spirit was smoother far than our softest sentiments. She must forgive all, and abate nothing. *All, without stint ; and abundantly, with all the heart.* Happy necessity ! Glorious achievement of "the power that worketh in us !" It was salvation and eternal life.

Thus you see, brethren, what is "the hope of His calling ; and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ; and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavens, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

We have said much, but could say no less. May we hope it shall prove to profit. "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." What should we do without the Holy Ghost in our religion ? What proprieties of behaviour, what mutually kind offices, what forms of faith, what acts of worship, what formal humiliations, what alms-giving, what possible performances of poor human nature might supply his presence ? "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." And how shall we receive the Spirit—"the power that worketh in us"—but through faith, simple faith in Christ crucified ? As it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; (for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree ;') that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ; *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*" And again, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Let it then be your continual aim and endeavour to be delivered from all false dependences, and "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." And having received FAITH *by the word*, and THE SPIRIT *through faith* ; and being "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory ;" and "looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God," let us, without

faltering, trust in God, that he "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Let us be especially guarded against that specious form of unbelief, which, affecting humility, scarce can believe any thing, asks for but little, and receives less.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

And, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto HIM be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. AMEN."

THE END.

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